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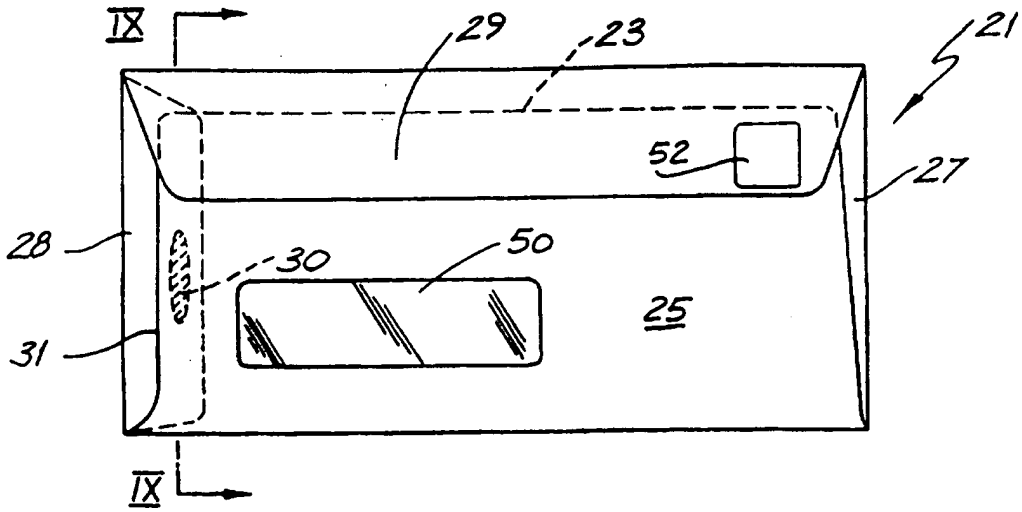

(57) Abstract

A reusable envelope (21) is provided by means of which an addressee at a first address can dispatch material to a second address, said envelope comprising a front panel (22), a rear panel (25), an insertion flap (29) and a reuse flap (28), said insertion flap being adapted to close and seal a first opening in said envelope through which the initial contents of the envelope can be inserted, and said reuse flap (28) being adapted to close a second opening in said envelope, said reuse flap (28) being provided with releasable closure means (30) adapted to allow the addressee to remove the initial contents of the envelope through the second opening, and also being provided with addressee sealing means (30) to allow the addressee to seal the second opening before dispatching the envelope to the second address, wherein the reusable envelope is provided with machine readable code obscuring means for allowing the addressee, before dispatching the envelope to the second address, to obscure any machine readable code (40) which has been placed on the envelope to indicate the first address.

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REUSABLE ENVELOPES

Field of the Invention

The present invention relates to reusable envelopes, to blanks for such envelopes, and to a method of delivering and receiving correspondence.

Background Art

A double use envelope, or so called "reusable envelope", is particularly intended for use by public utilities and like organisations which dispatch an account to their customers with the intention that the customer (or addressee) return a portion of the account together with a cheque for payment of the account to the utility. Prior to the advent of reusable envelopes it was the custom for utilities to enclose an envelope for the addressee's use in order to make it convenient for the account to be paid by the addressee.

An advantage of a reusable envelope is that it can allow a substantial operating expense for the utility or like organisation to be saved. Many such organisations have many tens of thousands of customers and therefore the supply of the return envelope represents a not insignificant operating expense.

Furthermore, there is an environmental advantage to the use of such reusable envelopes since they represent a saving in paper (or like material used to construct the envelope) and are thereby environmentally friendly.

A particular problem with reusable envelopes is that the postal authority normally encodes the front surface of the envelope with a machine readable code representing the postal code (or zip code as the code is termed in the USA) of the initial addressee.

Summary of the Invention

According to the invention there is provided a reusable envelope by means of which an addressee at a first address can dispatch material to a second address, said envelope comprising a front panel, a rear panel, an insertion flap and a reuse flap, said insertion flap being adapted to close and seal a first opening in said envelope through which the initial contents of the envelope can be inserted, and said reuse flap being

adapted to close a second opening in said envelope, said reuse flap being provided with releasable closure means adapted to allow the addressee to remove the initial contents of the envelope through the second opening, and also being provided with addressee sealing means to allow the addressee to seal the second opening before dispatching the envelope to the second address, wherein the reusable envelope is provided with machine readable code obscuring means for allowing the addressee, before dispatching the envelope to the second address, to obscure any machine readable code which has been placed on the envelope to indicate the first address.

In one embodiment of the invention, the machine readable code obscuring means comprises an adhesive strip which is contained in the envelope on delivery to the addressee, and which the addressee can use to cover the machine readable code before dispatching the envelope to the second address.

In a further embodiment of the invention, the machine readable code obscuring means comprises a releasable adhesive strip which is adhered to the outside of the envelope on dispatch of the envelope to the addressee at the first address, the adhesive strip being adhered at a location on the envelope at which the machine readable code will be placed, so that the addressee can remove the adhesive strip, and thus also the machine readable code thereon, before dispatching the envelope to the second address.

In another embodiment of the invention, the machine readable code obscuring means comprises rear address means, located on the rear panel, for indicating the second address.

The rear address means can, for example, be a transparent window provided in the rear panel, or an adhesive address label carrying the second address and adapted to be placed on the rear panel of the envelope.

In the simplest case the rear address means comprises the second address printed on the rear panel of the envelope.

Additionally or alternatively, the machine readable code obscuring means comprises stamp affixment indication means for indicating to the addressee at the first

address that a stamp is to be placed on the rear of the envelope when sending the envelope to the second address.

It will be appreciated that if the envelope is provided with the rear address means and/or the stamp affixment indication means, then any machine readable code on the front of the envelope will be obscured when the envelope is sent by the addressee to the second address because the machine readable code will lie on the opposite side of the envelope to that which is of relevance to the postal service in delivering the envelope to the second address. In this regard, most postal services are now able to detect which side of an envelope is to be treated as the "front" by detecting the presence of a stamp on that side. If the envelope is franked when it is sent to the addressee at the first address, and hence does not carry a stamp on its front panel, and if the addressee affixes a stamp on the rear of the envelope before sending the envelope to the second address, it will be appreciated that the postal service will have no difficulty is automatically detecting which side of the envelope is now to be regarded as the front for the purposes of delivering the envelope to the second address. The postal service can then place a machine readable code on the rear panel corresponding to the second address, and any machine readable code on the front panel (corresponding to the first address) will be obscured from the machine reading equipment of the postal service, and will accordingly be ignored.

Preferably, the rear address means and/or stamp affixment indication means is or are arranged on the rear panel in such a way that the second address, located on the rear panel, is upside down in relation to the first address, located on the front panel.

For example, this can be achieved by selecting an appropriate position for the transparent window or stamp affixment indication means, if these are provided, or by simply printing the second address upside down on the rear panel of the envelope.

This feature provides a number of advantages. In some postal systems, machine readable codes are placed on both sides of the envelope by the postal services during delivery of the envelope to the first address. In such cases, the machine readable codes are normally placed along the bottom edges of the front and rear panels

of the envelope. However, if the second address, on the rear panel of the envelope, is upside down in relation to the first address, on the front panel of the envelope, it will be appreciated that what was the bottom edge of the envelope on the first trip (i.e. to the first address) will become the top edge of the envelope on the second trip (i.e. to the second address), and any machine readable codes placed on the envelope during the first trip will be disregarded by the postal services during the second trip, notwithstanding the fact that machine readable codes are placed on both sides of the envelope on both trips.

A further advantage of this feature arises in the case where a machine readable code is placed on only one side of the envelope during the first trip, but, for one reason or another, the equipment of the postal services is still able to read the machine readable code on the second trip even though the equipment is reading the rear panel of the envelope and the machine readable code is located on the front panel of the envelope. This can happen in a case where the equipment of the postal service is able to "see through" certain types of paper. This problem is overcome by the above feature as a result of the fact that any machine readable codes placed along the bottom edge of the envelope during the first trip are located along the top edge of the envelope during the second trip, and are thus not seen by the equipment of the postal service, even if the equipment can read through the paper of the envelope.

A further advantage of this feature of the invention lies in the convenience to the addressee. The addressee can simply flip the envelope over in order to read material printed on the front and rear panels of the envelope, and said material is automatically in the correct orientation to be read by the addressee.

In a further embodiment of the invention, the machine readable code obscuring means takes the form of a further machine readable code placed on the envelope, for example alongside the machine readable code indicating the first address, indicating to code reading machinery of the postal service that the machine readable code indicating the first address is to be disregarded when delivering the envelope to the second address.

Conveniently, the envelope is formed from a single sheet of paper.

From an environmental and cost-saving point of view, it is advantageous if the envelope is a two-panel envelope comprising only two panels, namely said front and rear panels.

Preferably, the first and second openings, and the insertion and reuse flaps extend along two adjacent edges of the envelope.

In another embodiment of the invention, the machine readable code obscuring means comprises stamp affixment indication means located in each of a pair of opposite corners of the front panel, so as to indicate that said envelope is to be used in a first orientation when dispatched to said first address and is to be used in an inverted orientation when dispatched to said second address.

Preferably, the envelope is provided with a transparent window, so as to enable an address within the envelope to be viewed. This allows the envelope to be easily readdressed, simply by altering the contents of the envelope so that the second address is visible through the transparent window.

Alternatively or additionally, an adhesive label, either blank or preprinted with the second address, is provided for placement over the first address or transparent window.

As a further alternative, the front panel can be provided with an adhesive label bearing the first address and adapted to be removed by the first addressee. It is further preferred that said second address be provided on the front panel so as to be exposed upon removal of the adhesive label. An advantage of the last mentioned embodiment is that the second address can be printed in the inverted orientation, thereby avoiding any errors that the second addressee can otherwise make when readdressing the envelope.

An advantage of the above embodiments is that a machine readable code applied during the first use of the envelope, typically placed adjacent one edge of the envelope, is repositioned for the second use of the envelope. That is, if a machine readable code was placed adjacent the bottom edge of the envelope during its first use, then when the envelope is inverted for its second use, the machine readable code is now

located adjacent the top edge. The new bottom edge, which was the top edge, is now free of machine readable codes, allowing a fresh code to be placed on the envelope without any confusion with existing codes. This enables the envelope to be reused whether the machine readable code is placed on either or both faces of the envelope.

According to another form of the invention, there is provided a reusable envelope adapted for use in a first orientation during a first use to dispatch material to a first address, and being further adapted for use in an inverted orientation relative to said first orientation when despatching material to a second address.

Preferably, said envelope is provided with stamp affixment indication means located in a pair of opposite corners of one of the faces of the envelope.

In accordance with a second aspect of the present invention there is disclosed a blank from which the above-described reusable envelope can be fabricated.

Further aspects of the invention also provide methods of delivering and receiving correspondence using a reusable envelope as described above.

Brief Description of the Drawings

Some examples of the prior art and preferred embodiments of the present invention will now be described, by way of example only, with reference to the accompanying drawings, in which:

Fig. 1 is a plan view of the rear side of a prior art double use envelope,

Fig. 2 is a plan view of the front face of the envelope of Fig. 1,

Fig. 3 is a cross-sectional view taken along the line III-III of Fig. 1,

Figs. 4, 5 and 6 are views similar to Fig. 3 but illustrating the sequence of steps required to open and subsequently reseal the envelope of Fig. 1,

Fig. 7 is a view similar to Fig. 1 but illustrating a reusable envelope of a preferred embodiment,

Fig. 8 is a view similar to Fig. 2 but illustrating the reusable envelope of Fig. 7,

Fig. 9 is a cross-sectional view along the line IX-IX of Fig. 7,

Fig. 10 is a view of the right hand edge of the rear of the envelope of Fig. 7 illustrating how the envelope is opened by an addressee,

Fig. 11 is a view of the right hand end of the rear of the envelope of Fig. 7 illustrating how the envelope is resealed by the addressee,

Fig. 12 is a plan view of the blank from which the envelope of Fig. 7 is fabricated;

Fig. 13 is a view similar to Fig. 8 but illustrating a method of avoiding confusion between two machine readable codes when an envelope is reused;

Fig. 14 is a plan view of an envelope blank of a further preferred embodiment;

Fig. 15 is a plan view of the front face of an alternative reusable envelope; and

Fig. 16 is a plan view of the rear face of the envelope of Fig. 15.

Best and Other Modes for Performing the Invention

As seen in Figs. 1 to 6 the prior art envelope 1 has a front face 2 with two window apertures 3, 4. The rear face 5 of the envelope is extended so as to provide an interior flap 6 illustrated in cross-section in Fig. 3. The front face 2 of the envelope 1 is extended at each end so as to provide two end flaps 7, 8 which are permanently sealed to the rear face 5 in order seal the ends of the envelope 1.

Finally, the front face 2 of the envelope 1 is extended to form a main flap 9 which is separated from the front face 2 by means of a line of perforations 10.

In the condition in which the envelope 1 is delivered to the initial user from the envelope manufacturer, the main flap 9 is open but the end flaps 7, 8 are sealed to the rear face 5. The interior flap 6 is folded inwardly upon itself as indicated in Fig. 3. The initial user of the envelope inserts the material he wishes to send to the addressee into the envelope and then seals the main flap 9 in conventional fashion.

As indicated in Fig. 3 the addressee lifts up the main flap 9 in the direction indicated by arrow A in Fig. 3. Then the flap 9 is detached from the envelope 1 by rupturing the line of perforations 10 as indicated by arrow B in Fig. 4. This procedure allows not only the contents of the envelope 1 to be accessed and removed, but also

enables the interior flap 6 to be easily folded outwardly so as to form a new "main flap".

As a consequence, the addressee is then able to insert the material which is intended to be mailed to another address (normally the address of the initial sender). Once this material is inserted into the envelope 1 the flap 6 is folded outwardly and downwardly as indicated by arrow C in Fig. 5. Finally the flap 6 is adhered to the front face 2 of the envelope.

In one variation of the prior art envelope, the name and address to which the envelope is to be sent in its second use are printed on the outside of the interior flap 6 and thus is effectively located at the front of the envelope in the configuration illustrated in Fig. 6. An important feature of the interior flap 6 is that it covers any marks which have been applied to the front face of the envelope by the postal authorities and, in particular, any postal code or zip code marking which is able to be read by automatic machinery.

If desired the lower left hand corner of the front flap 6 which would normally overlie the lower aperture 4 can be removed so as to enable the window aperture 4 to still reveal the interior contents of the envelope. In this way, the material to be sent to the second address can be so arranged so as to show the second address through the window aperture 4.

The above described prior art is relatively complex to manufacture and suffers from the disadvantage that the cost of fabrication of the envelope is only approximately 20% less than the cost of providing two simple conventional envelopes. Furthermore, the operating instructions are relatively complex and therefore not all addressees are able to easily utilise the double use envelope.

Turning now to Figs. 7 to 9, a reusable envelope of a preferred embodiment will be described. The reusable envelope 21 allows an addressee at a first address to remove the contents of the envelope 21, insert new contents, and then send the envelope 21 to a second address. As seen in Fig. 7, the envelope 21 has a front face 22 and a rear face 25. The front face 22 is conveniently provided with a window aperture

24 for displaying the first address. As seen in Fig. 7 the left hand end of the envelope 21 (looking from the front of the envelope 21) is provided with an end flap 27, the exterior surface of which is permanently sealed to the interior surface of the rear face 25.

As with a conventional envelope, the front face 22 is extended so as to provide a main flap 29 which, when in the folded position illustrated in Fig. 7, covers the upper edge 23 of the rear face 25. In Fig. 7 the upper edge 23 of the rear face 25 is illustrated in phantom.

As also seen in Fig. 7, the right hand end of the envelope 21 is provided with an end flap 28. Also illustrated in phantom in Fig. 7 is the periphery of the end flap 28. As indicated in Fig. 7 the exterior surface of the end flap 28 is provided with a strip, or a series of spots, of releasable adhesive 30 which is located on the exterior surface of the end flap 28 and releasably adheres same to the interior surface of the rear face 25 which is provided with a cut-away profile 31 in this vicinity.

As a consequence to the above-described arrangement, the envelope 21 of the preferred embodiment is delivered by the envelope manufacturer to the first user with the main flap 29 unsealed but with the end flaps 27 and 28 both sealed to the interior surface of the rear face 25. Only the end flap 28 is releasably sealed, however. As a consequence, the interior contents of the envelope 21 are able to be inserted using conventional insertion machinery into the envelope 21 through the opening provided between the main flap 29 and the upper edge 23 of the rear face 25. Then the main flap 29 is permanently sealed in conventional fashion. This is the position illustrated in Fig. 9.

The procedure by which the addressee at the first address opens the envelope of Figs. 7 and 8 is illustrated in Fig. 10. The addressee inserts his left index finger 35 into the slit formed between the rear face 25 and end flap 28 so as to break the hold of the releasable adhesive 30. As a consequence, the end flap 28 is able to be folded out of the interior of the envelope and the initial contents of the envelope thereby removed.

Thereafter the addressee is able to insert the final contents of the envelope by means of the opening between the end flap 28 and the rear face 25, and then seal the envelope by means of the end flap 28. This is preferably done by means of a moisture activated gum 38 (Fig. 12) which is located on the interior surface of the end flap 28. In this condition the envelope 21 is then ready to be sent by the addressee to the second address.

Fig. 12 shows the blank from which the envelope 21 is fabricated. The blank is illustrated in plan view, with the interior surface of the envelope 21 being illustrated.

Most postal services apply machine readable codes to envelopes to indicate the postal district or postcode of the addressee. In that case, when the envelope 21 arrives at the addressee at the first address, there will be a machine readable code 40 positioned thereon which indicates the postcode of the first address, as shown in Fig. 8. It will be appreciated that the presence of the machine readable code 40 could cause confusion when the envelope 21 is reused as described above, and sent to the second address. Several different ways of avoiding such confusion will be described in relation to the preferred embodiments described below.

As shown in Figs. 7 and 12, the envelope 21 can be provided with a second transparent window 50 in the rear face 25. When the envelope is sent by the addressee to the second address, the addressee ensures that the second address is visible through the second window 50, and that the window aperture 24 on the front face 22 is left blank. If the second window 50 is not provided, the addressee at the first address can write the second address on the rear face 25, or apply an adhesive address label. In an alternative embodiment, the second address can be pre-printed on the rear face 25.

In addition, a stamp affixment box 52 is printed on the outside surface of the main flap 29 in order to direct the addressee at the first address to affix a stamp on the rear of the envelope 21 before sending the envelope 21 to the second address. Postal services are now generally equipped with equipment which can detect which side of an envelope carries a stamp, and turn the envelope over if necessary before applying or reading a machine readable code. When the envelope 21 is sent to the second address

the postal service will treat the rear face 25 as the "front" of the envelope, and accordingly the machine readable code 40 at the front face 22 will be ignored by the postal service's code reading machinery. A machine readable code indicative of the second address can therefore be placed on the rear face 25 without the danger of its becoming confused with the machine readable code 40 indicative of the first address.

As an alternative to the second window 50 and the stamp affixment box 52, the envelope 21 can be provided with an adhesive strip 54 which can be placed over the machine readable code 40 by the addressee before sending the envelope 21 to the second address. Alternatively, the adhesive strip 54 can be placed on the front face 22 of the envelope 21 before the envelope 21 is dispatched to the first address. In that case, the adhesive strip 54 must be positioned on the front face 22 at the position at which the machine readable code 40 will be applied by the postal service. The addressee at the first address can then simply peel off the adhesive strip 54 before the envelope is sent to the second address.

A further way of avoiding confusion between the machine readable codes indicating the first and second addresses is illustrated in Fig. 13. When the envelope 21 is reused and sent to the second address, the postal service applies a further machine readable code 42 which is conveniently positioned alongside the first code 40 and which indicates to the code reading machinery of the postal service that the code 40 is to be disregarded. The postal service also applies a machine readable code 41 indicative of the second address, and the code 41 is able to be read without confusion with the code 40.

In the cases of use of the adhesive strip 54 or machine readable code 42, it will be appreciated that the envelope 21 need not be provided with the second window 50. Rather, the addressee at the first address simply ensures that the second address is visible through the window aperture 24 in the front face 22 before sending the envelope to the second address.

The foregoing arrangement has a number of significant advantages. In particular, the amount of paper used to create the envelope is substantially the same as

that used to create a conventional envelope. Furthermore, the envelope is able to be reused without modification to the mail system. Furthermore, with the above-described minor modification of the postal authority's machine readable code producing and reading equipment, a second machine readable code 42 is able to be produced on the envelope so as to correctly indicate the second address to which the envelope is intended to be sent.

Figure 14 shows an envelope blank 60 of a further embodiment. The envelope blank 60 comprises front and rear panels 62 and 64 respectively, and is provided with an insertion flap 66 and a reuse flap 68. A transparent window 70 is provided in the front panel 62, through which the first address can be displayed. A stamp or postage paid stamp 72 is placed in the top right corner of the front panel 62.

On the rear panel 64, there is printed the second address 74, together with instructions 76 and a stamp affixment indication box 78. By way of additional explanation of the instructions 76, it will be noted that the instructions 76 refer to "the shaded area", which is the portion of a shaded area 80 of the reuse flap 68 which is visible when the envelope blank 60 is folded to form an envelope. The instructions also refer to "the white arrow", which is labelled as 82 in Figure 14.

It will be observed that all of the printed matter on the rear panel 64, namely the second address 74, instructions 76 and stamp box 78, is arranged so that it is upside down relative to the information on the front panel 62, namely the first address in the window 70, the postage stamp 72 and some further instructions 84, when the envelope is formed by folding along four fold lines 86. This provides a number of advantages, as discussed above, particularly when the envelope is used in postal systems which place a machine readable code on both sides of the envelope, or which use postal equipment which can, under certain circumstances, read machine readable codes through the paper of the envelope.

Figures 15 and 16 show a further embodiment of a reusable envelope 90, which has a front face 91, a rear face 92, a main flap 93 and two end flaps 94,95. The front face 91 is preferably provided with a transparent window 96. In use, the

envelope 90 is supplied to the first user with the main flap 93 unsealed, end flap 94 permanently sealed to the inner surface of rear face 92, and end flap 95 releasably sealed to the inner surface of the rear face 92. A postage paid mark 97 is typically located in the top right corner of the envelope 90, during its first use.

The envelope 90 is used by the first user in the same manner as the envelope 21 described with reference to Figs. 7 to 12, with the address of the first addressee being visible through the transparent window 96. During the first use, the address of the first addressee is oriented such that the postage paid mark 97 is located in the top right corner of the envelope 90. The first addressee opens the envelope 90 in the same manner as that previously described, using the releasably sealed end flap 95.

When the envelope 90 is being reused, the first addressee is able to insert the final contents of the envelope 90 by means of the opening between the end flap and the rear face 92, and then seal the opening. The contents of the envelope are arranged so that the address of the second addressee is visible through the transparent window 96 and is inverted compared to the address of the first addressee during the first use. When the envelope 90 is oriented such that the address of the second addressee is upright, the stamp affixment box which was in the bottom left corner 90 is located in the top right corner of the inverted envelope 90.

The machine readable codes applied by postal services to envelopes are typically located at a predetermined position on the envelope, such as a fixed distance from the lower edge of the envelope. The location of the machine readable code can of course vary between postal services and can even be applied to both faces of the envelope. During the first use of the envelope, the machine readable code will be applied to either or both sides of the envelope in a predetermined position, such as a fixed distance from the lower edge. When the envelope is used a second time, the envelope is inverted and so that region of the envelope to which a machine readable code is normally applied will be blank. The machine readable code previously applied will be located at a different location, and so will not cause confusion when the envelope is reused.

This embodiment of the envelope has several advantages. The amount of paper used to create this envelope is substantially the same as that of a conventional envelope, and only one transparent window is required. The envelope is also able to be reused without any modification to the postal system. Furthermore, the effort required on the part of the first addressee to reuse the envelope is minimal. The first addressee need only ensure the contents of the envelope are inserted the correct way up, ie. so that the stamp affixment box is in the top right hand corner of the envelope, and apply a stamp to the stamp affixment box. There is no need for the first addressee to apply or remove any adhesive strips.

The foregoing describes only some embodiments of the present invention and modifications, obvious to those skilled in the art, can be made thereto without departing from the scope of the present invention.

CLAIMS:

1. A reusable envelope by means of which an addressee at a first address can dispatch material to a second address, said envelope comprising a front panel, a rear panel, an insertion flap and a reuse flap, said insertion flap being adapted to close and seal a first opening in said envelope through which the initial contents of the envelope can be inserted, and said reuse flap being adapted to close a second opening in said envelope, said reuse flap being provided with releasable closure means adapted to allow the addressee to remove the initial contents of the envelope through the second opening, and also being provided with addressee sealing means to allow the addressee to seal the second opening before dispatching the envelope to the second address, wherein the reusable envelope is provided with machine readable code obscuring means for allowing the addressee, before dispatching the envelope to the second address, to obscure any machine readable code which has been placed on the envelope to indicate the first address.

2. An envelope as claimed in claim 1 wherein the machine readable code obscuring means comprises an adhesive strip which is contained in the envelope on delivery to the addressee, and which the addressee can use to cover the machine readable code before dispatching the envelope to the second address.

3. An envelope as claimed in claim 1 wherein, the machine readable code obscuring means comprises a releasable adhesive strip which is adhered to the outside of the envelope on dispatch of the envelope to the addressee at the first address, the adhesive strip being adhered at a location on the envelope at which the machine readable code will be placed, so that the addressee can remove the adhesive strip, and thus also the machine readable code thereon, before dispatching the envelope to the second address.

4. An envelope as claimed in claim 1 wherein, the machine readable code obscuring means comprises rear address means, located on the rear panel, for indicating the second address.

5. An envelope as claimed in claim 4 wherein the rear address means comprises one of a transparent window provided in the rear panel, or an adhesive address label carrying the second address and adapted to be placed on the rear panel of the envelope.

6. An envelope as claimed in claim 4 wherein, the rear address means comprises the second address printed on the rear panel of the envelope.

7. An envelope as claimed in any one of the preceding claims wherein, the machine readable code obscuring means comprises stamp affixment indication means for indicating to the addressee at the first address that a stamp is to be placed on the rear of the envelope when sending the envelope to the second address.

8. An envelope as claimed in claim 7 wherein, the stamp affixment indication means is arranged on the rear panel in such a way that the second address, located on the rear panel, is upside down in relation to the first address, located on the front panel.

9. An envelope as claimed in any one of claims 4 to 6 wherein, the rear address means is arranged on the rear panel in such a way that the second address, located on the rear panel, is upside down in relation to the first address, located on the front panel.

10. An envelope as claimed in claim 1 wherein, the machine readable code obscuring means takes the form of a further machine readable code placed on the envelope.

11. An envelope as claimed in claim 10 wherein the machine readable code obscuring means is placed alongside the machine readable code indicating the first address, indicating to code reading machinery of the postal service that the machine readable code indicating the first address is to be disregarded when delivering the envelope to the second address.

12. An envelope as claimed in any one of the preceding claims wherein, the envelope is formed from a single sheet of paper.

13. An envelope as claimed in any one of the preceding claims wherein, the envelope is a two-panel envelope comprising only two panels, namely said front and rear panels.

14. An envelope as claimed in any one of the preceding claims wherein, the first and second openings, and the insertion and reuse flaps extend along two adjacent edges of the envelope.

15. An envelope as claimed in claim 1 wherein, the machine readable code obscuring means comprises stamp affixment indication means located in each of a pair of opposite corners of the front panel, so as to indicate that said envelope is to be used in a first orientation when dispatched to said first address and is to be used in an inverted orientation when dispatched to said second address.

16. An envelope as claimed in any one of the preceding claims wherein, the envelope is provided with a transparent window, so as to enable an address within the envelope to be viewed.

17. An envelope as claimed in any one of the preceding claims wherein, an adhesive label, either blank or preprinted with the second address, is provided for placement over the first address or transparent window.

18. An envelope as claimed in any one of the preceding claims wherein, the front panel is provided with an adhesive label bearing the first address and adapted to be removed by the first addressee.

19. A resuable envelope adapted for use in a first orientation during a first use to dispatch material to a first address, and being further adapted for use in an inverted orientation relevant to said first orientation when dispatching material to a second address.

20. An envelope as claimed in claim 19 wherein, said envelope is provided with stamp affixment indication means located in a pair of opposite corners of one of the faces of the envelope.

21. A blank from which a reusable envelope as claimed in any one of the preceding claims can be fabricated.

AMENDED CLAIMS
[received by the International Bureau on 29 May 1996 (29.05.96); original claims 1-21 replaced by amended claims 1-15 (3 pages)]

1. A two-panel reusable envelope by means of which an addressee at a first address can dispatch material to a second address, said envelope comprising only two panels, namely a front panel and a rear panel, and further comprising an insertion flap and a reuse flap, said insertion flap being adapted to close and seal said envelope after the initial contents of the envelope have been inserted, and said reuse flap being adapted to allow the addressee to close and seal said envelope after opening the envelope and before dispatching the envelope to the second address, wherein the reusable envelope is provided with machine readable code obscuring means for allowing the addressee, before dispatching the envelope to the second address, to obscure any machine readable code which has been placed on the envelope to indicate the first address, and wherein said machine readable code obscuring means comprises rear address means, located on the rear panel, for indicating the second address, the rear address means being arranged on the rear panel in such a way that the second address, located on the rear panel, is upside down in relation to the first address, located on the front panel.

2. An envelope as claimed in claim 1, wherein the machine readable code obscuring means further comprises an adhesive strip which is contained in the envelope on delivery to the address, and which the addressee can use to cover the machine readable code before dispatching the envelope to the second address.

3. An envelope as claimed in claim 1 wherein, the machine readable code obscuring means further comprises a releasable adhesive strip which is adhered to the outside of the envelope on dispatch of the envelope to the addressee and the first address, the adhesive strip being adhered at a location on the envelope at which the machine readable code will be placed, so that the addressee can remove the adhesive strip, and thus also the machine readable code thereon, before dispatching the envelope to the second address.

4. An envelope as claimed in any preceding claim, wherein the rear address means comprises one of a transparent window provided in the rear panel, or an

adhesive address label carrying the second address and adapted to be placed on the rear panel of the envelope.

5. An envelope as claimed in any preceding claim, wherein the rear address means comprises the second address printed on the rear panel of the envelope.

6. An envelope as claimed in any one of the preceding claims, wherein the machine readable code obscuring means further comprises stamp affixment indication means for indicating to the address at the first address that a stamp is to be placed on the rear of the envelope when sending the envelope to the second address the stamp affixment indication means being arranged on the rear panel in such a way that the second address, located on the rear panel, is upside down in relation to the first address, located on the front panel.

7. An envelope as claimed in claim 1, wherein the machine readable code obscuring means further comprises a further machine readable code placed on the envelope.

8. An envelope as claimed in claim 7, wherein the machine readable code obscuring means is placed alongside the machine readable code indicating the first address, indicating to code reading machinery of the postal service that the machine readable code indicating the first address is to be disregarded when delivering the envelope to the second address.

9. An envelope as claimed in any one of the preceding claims wherein, the envelope is formed from a single sheet of paper.

10. An envelope as claimed in any one of the preceding claims, which further comprises a first opening adapted to be closed and sealed by said insertion flap, and a second opening adapted to be closed and sealed by said reuse flap, and wherein the first and second openings, and the insertion and reuse flaps extend along two adjacent edges of the envelope.

11. An envelope as claimed in any one of the preceding claims, which is provided with a transparent window, so as to enable an address within the envelope to be viewed.

12. An envelope as claimed in any one of the preceding claims, wherein the front panel is provided with an adhesive label bearing the first address and adapted to be removed by the first addressee.

13. A reusable envelope comprising front and rear panels, and being adapted for use in a first orientation during a first use to dispatch material to a first address, and being further adapted for use in an inverted orientation relative to said first orientation when dispatching material to a second address, and said front panel being adapted to bear said first address during said first use and said second address when the envelope is despatched to said second address.

14. An envelope as claimed in claim 13, wherein said envelope is provided with stamp affixment indication means located in a pair of opposite corners of said front panel of the envelope.

15. A blank from which a reusable envelope as claimed in any one of the preceding claims can be fabricated.

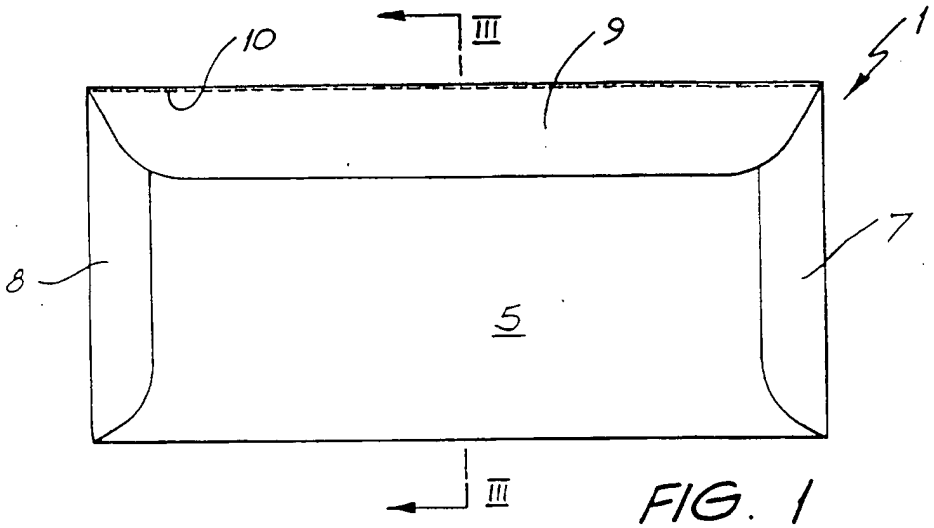


FIG. 1
PRIOR ART

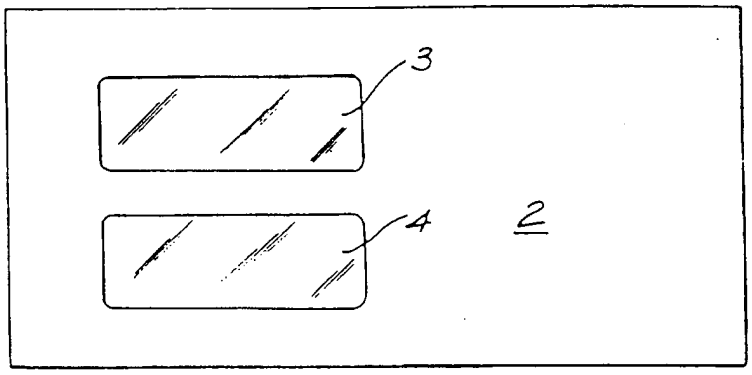


FIG. 2
PRIOR ART

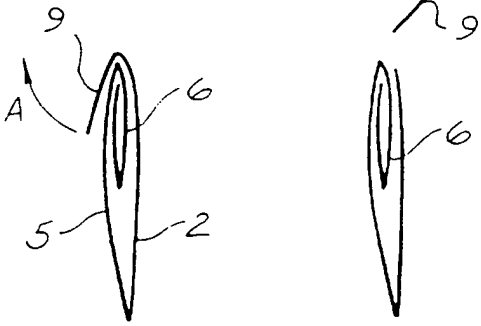


FIG. 3

FIG. 4

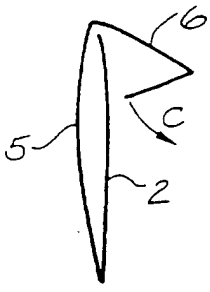


FIG. 5

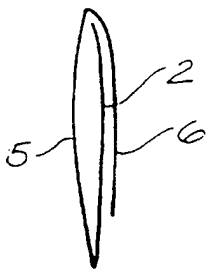


FIG. 6

PRIOR ART

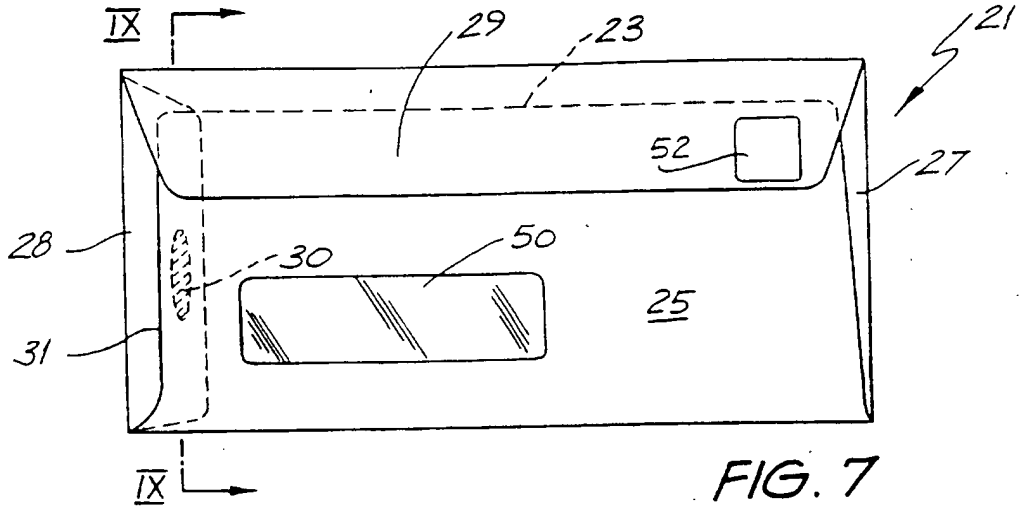


FIG. 7

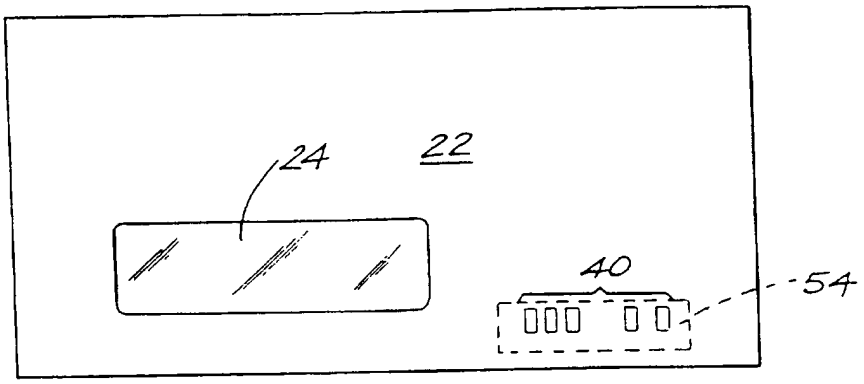


FIG. 8

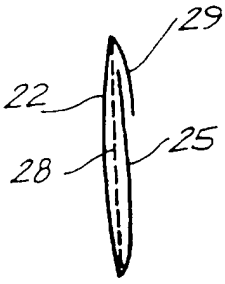


FIG. 9

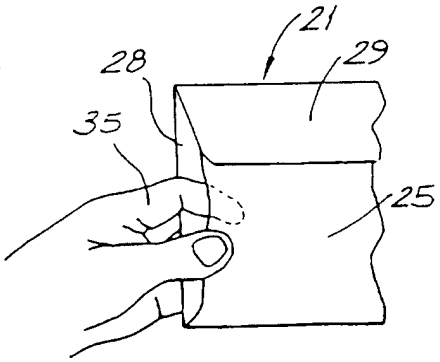


FIG. 10

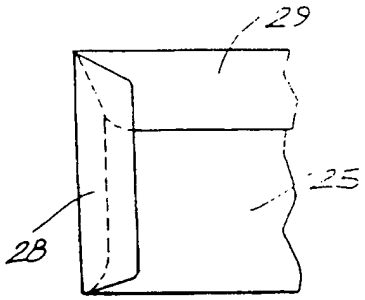


FIG. 11

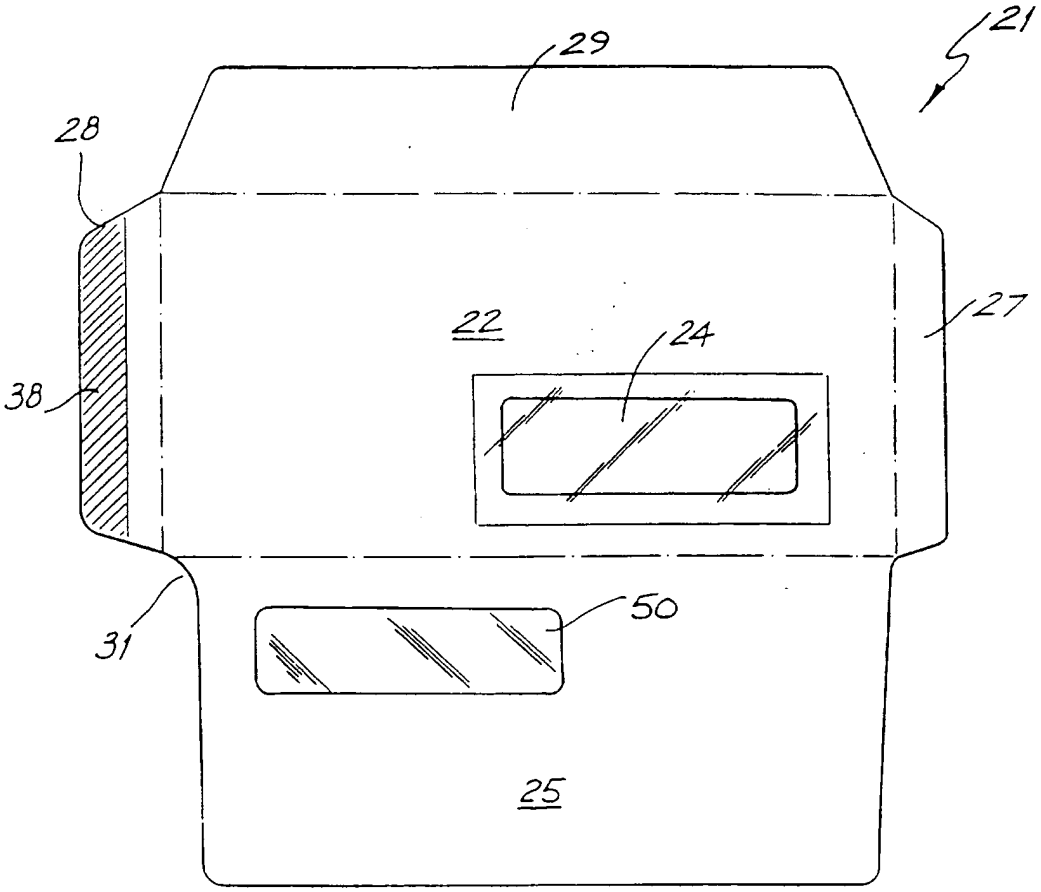


FIG. 12

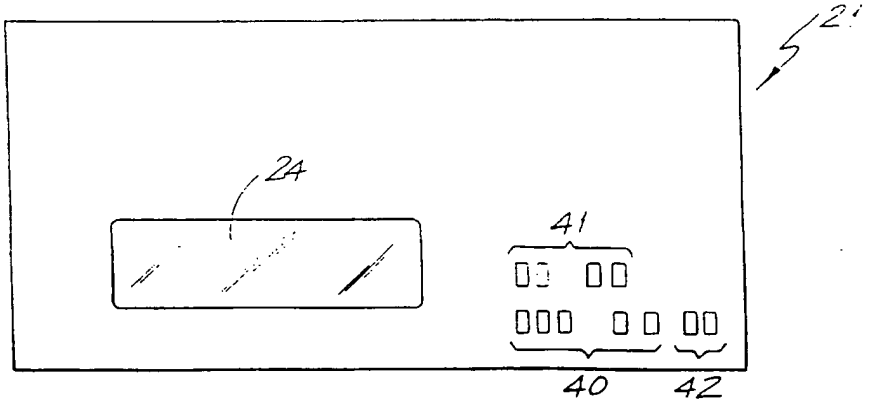


FIG. 13

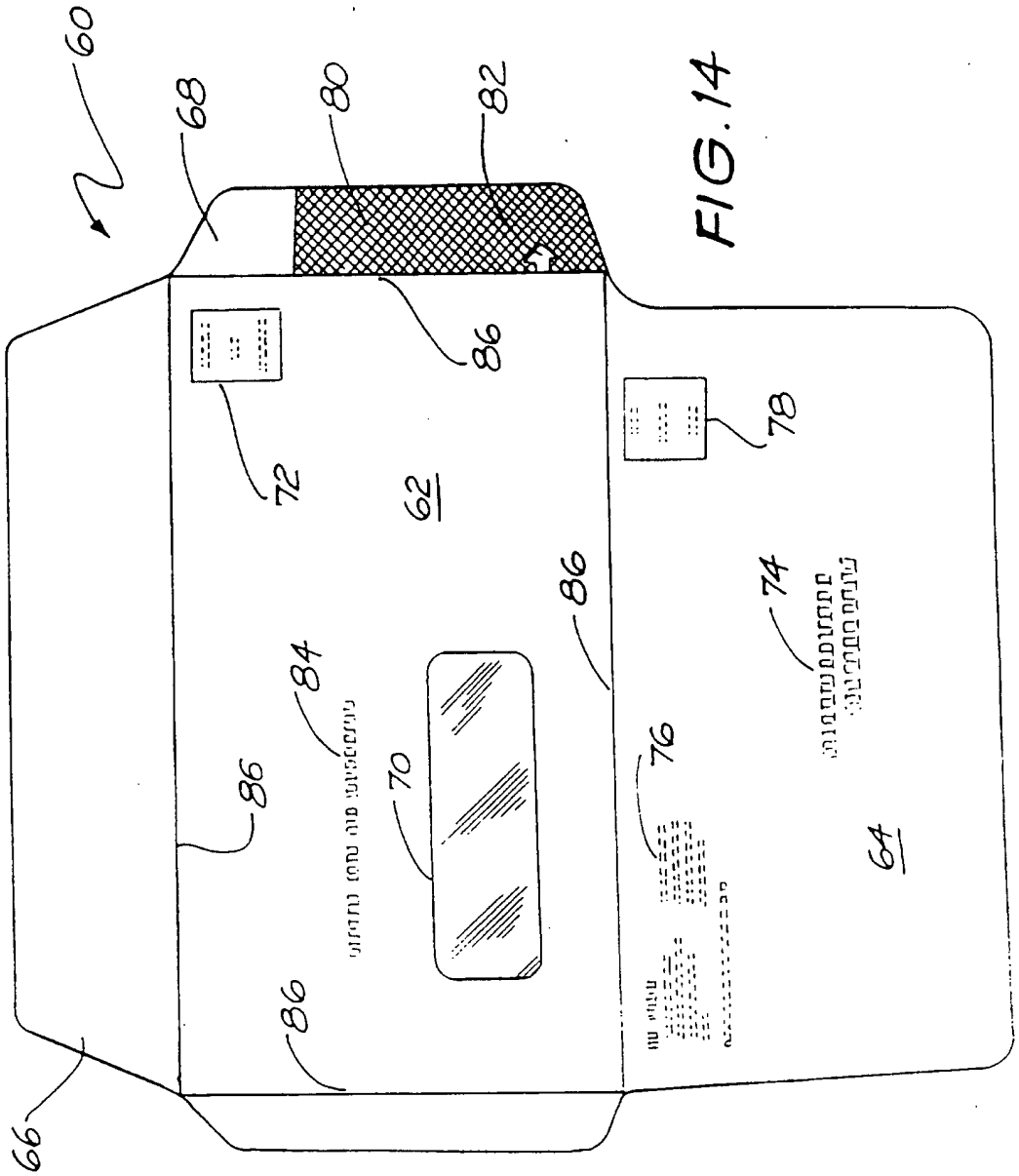


FIG. 14

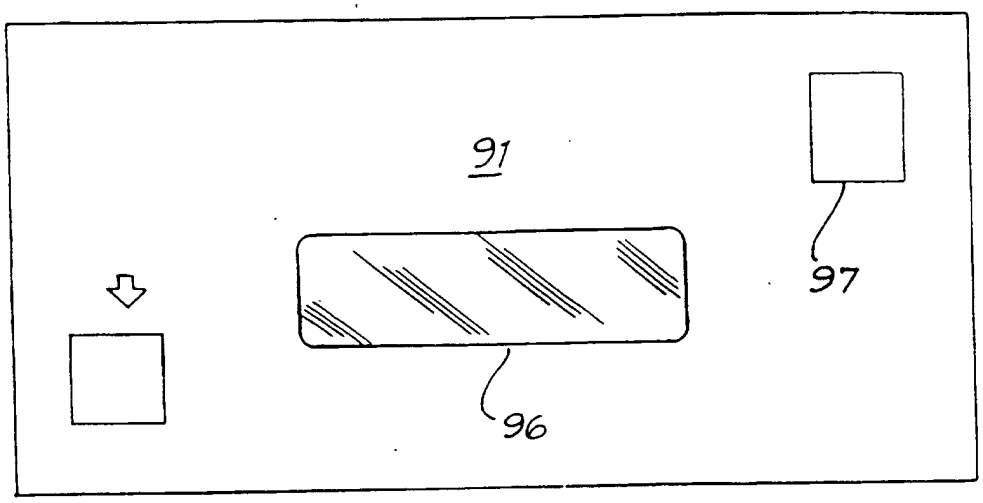
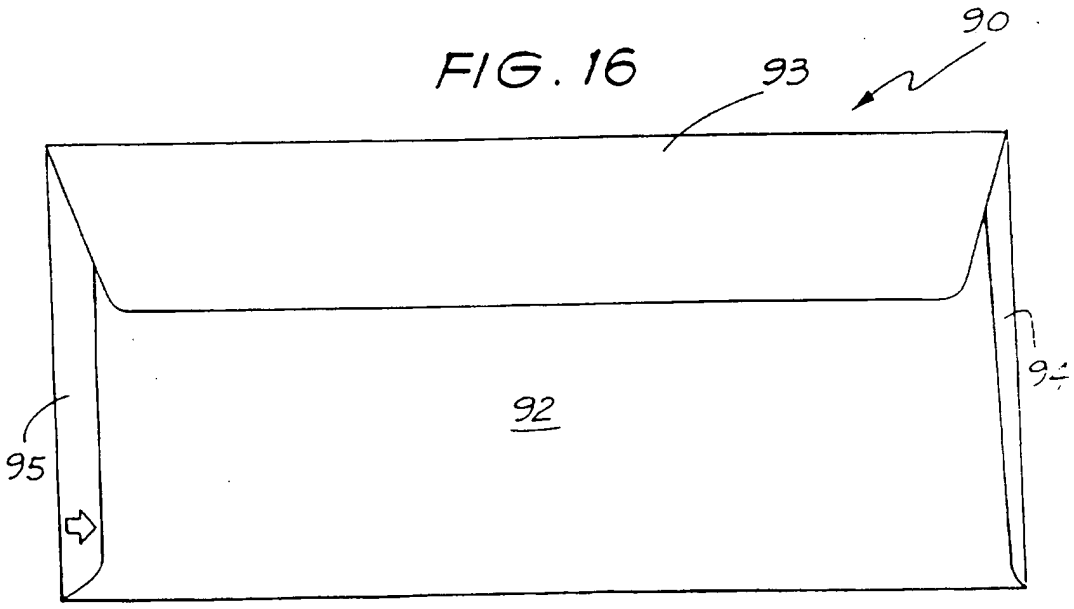


FIG. 15

FIG. 16



INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International Application No.
PCT/AU 96/00010

A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER

Int Cl[6]: B65D 27/06

According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both national classification and IPC

B. FIELDS SEARCHED

Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols)
IPC: B65D 27/06
USCI: 229/301; 229/303; 229/306

Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included in the fields searched
AU: IPC B65D 27/06

Electronic data base consulted during the international search (name of data base and, where practicable, search terms used)

C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category*	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
X,Y	AU 51656/59 B (234035) (TENSION ENVELOPE CORPORATION OF KANSAS CITY) 11 February 1960 Whole document, Figs 8, 8A.	1-18, 19-21
X,Y	US 3143280 (HEIRSTEINER) 4 August 1964 Whole document	1-18, 19-21
X	US 5277362 (WILSON) 11 January 1994 Whole document	1, 3, 12, 14, 18, 21

[X] Further documents are listed in the continuation of Box C

[X] See patent family annex

* Special categories of cited documents:

"A" document defining the general state of the art which is not considered to be of particular relevance

"E" earlier document but published on or after the international filing date

"L" document which may throw doubts on priority claim(s) or which is cited to establish the publication date of another citation or other special reason (as specified)

"O" document referring to an oral disclosure, use, exhibition or other means

"P" document published prior to the international filing date but later than the priority date claimed

"T" later document published after the international filing date or priority date and not in conflict with the application but cited to understand the principle or theory underlying the invention

"X" document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered novel or cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is taken alone

"Y" document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is combined with one or more other such documents, such combination being obvious to a person skilled in the art

"&" document member of the same patent family

Date of the actual completion of the international search	Date of mailing of the international search report
22 March 1996	29.03.96
Name and mailing address of the ISA/AU AUSTRALIAN INDUSTRIAL PROPERTY ORGANISATION PO BOX 200 WODEN ACT 2606 AUSTRALIA Facsimile No.: (06) 285 3929	Authorized officer **R.J. KIRBY** Telephone No.: (06) 283 2369

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International Application No.
PCT/AU 96/00010

C (Continuation) **DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT**

Category*	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
Y	AU 44746/93 A (MOORE BUSINESS FORMS, INC) 24 February 1994 Whole document	1, 3, 4, 5, 7
P,Y	AU 79004/94 A (BEARD) 1 June 1995 Whole document	3, 10-13, 16, 17, 18
X		19, 21
X	US 3380648 (LYRA) 30 April 1968 Whole document	19, 21
Y	Cover up labels	2
Y	US 3270948 (DONOVAN) 6 September 1966 Whole document	4, 6, 16
Y	US 3360184 (GREASON) 26 December 1967 Whole document	4, 6, 7
X	US 2681175 (DAVID) 15 June 1954 Whole document	19, 21
Y		4, 5, 16
Y	US 5207373 (TIGHE) 4 May 1993 Whole document	4, 6, 7, 8
X	US 2759658 (SAWDON) 21 August 1956 Whole document	19, 21
Y		4, 6, 7, 8,9
Y	US 5251810 (KIM) 12 October 1993 Whole document	4, 5, 7, 16
Y	US 4993624 (SCHLICH) 19 February 1991 Whole document	4, 5
Y	US 3506186 (VON CLEMM) 1 April 1970 Whole document	5, 17
Y	US 4445635 (BARR) 1 May 1984 Whole document	10, 11
X	DT 2614013 A1 (REINHART SCHMIDT GmbH) 6 October 1977 Whole document	19, 21
Y		1-18
Y	US 5285958 (BUESCHER) 15 February 1994 Whole document	1

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International Application No.
PCT/ AU 96/00010

C (Continuation) **DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT**

Category*	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
Y	US 5232150 (SOLOMONS) 3 August 1993 Whole document	1, 16
Y	DE 3130996 A1 (ATREX AG) Whole document	17
Y	US 4706877 (JENKINS) 17 November 1987 Whole document	17,18

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

...ternational Application No.
PCT/AU 96/00010

Box 1 Observations where certain claims were found unsearchable (Continuation of item 1 of first sheet)

This International Search Report has not been established in respect of certain claims under Article 17(2)(a) for the following reasons:

1. ☐ Claims Nos.:
because they relate to subject matter not required to be searched by this Authority, namely:

2. ☐ Claims Nos.:
because they relate to parts of the international application that do not comply with the prescribed requirements to such an extent that no meaningful international search can be carried out, specifically:

3. ☐ Claims Nos.:
because they are dependent claims and are not drafted in accordance with the second and third sentences of Rule 6.4(a)

Box II Observations where unity of invention is lacking (Continuation of item 2 of first sheet)

This International Searching Authority found multiple inventions in this international application, as follows:

Claims 1, 2, 3, 4, 7, 10, 15, 19 each defining a separate special technical feature as reasoned on the extra sheet.

1. ☐ As all required additional search fees were timely paid by the applicant, this international search report covers all searchable claims

2. ☒ As all searchable claims could be searched without effort justifying an additional fee, this Authority did not invite payment of any additional fee.

3. ☐ As only some of the required additional search fees were timely paid by the applicant, this international search report covers only those claims for which fees were paid, specifically claims Nos.:

4. ☐ No required additional search fees were timely paid by the applicant. Consequently, this international search report is restricted to the invention first mentioned in the claims; it is covered by claims Nos.:

Remark on Protest

☐ The additional search fees were accompanied by the applicant's protest.

☐ No protest accompanied the payment of additional search fees.

Box II continued

The international application does not comply with the requirements of unity of invention because it does not relate to one invention or to a group of inventions so linked as to form a single general inventive concept. In coming to this conclusion the International Searching Authority has identified the following inventions:

Separate inventions in claims 1, 2, 3, 4, 7, 10, 15 and 19

The invention in claim 1 (and of appended claims 2, 3, 4, 7, 10 and 15) relates to a reusable envelope having an insertion flap to close and seal a first opening and a reuse flap to close a second opening, the reuse flap being provided with releaseable closure means and addressee sealing means and the envelope being provided with machine readable code obscuring means.

The envelope as defined in claim 1 is not novel over for example AU 51656/59 in which the extended end flap 10 (Figs 8 and 8A) may be considered a means able to obscure a machine readable code or alternatively the envelope is able to be readdressed on the rear face thereby obscuring the first placed code from the reading machine.

Since each of claims 2, 3, 4, 7, 10 and 15 define a specific machine readable code obscuring means and in the light of claim 1 being not novel then these claims each define a separate invention in their own right each characterised by a separate special technical feature not found in the other claims.

Independent claim 19 to a reusable envelope of no specific form but characterised by the special technical feature of being able to be reused in an inverted orientation relative to the first use orientation represents a further invention over those of claims 1, 2, 3,4, 7, 10 and 15

Claim 20 although appended to claim 19 may be said to share a special technical feature similar to that of claim 15.

Since the above mentioned claims do not share either of the technical features identified, a "technical relationship" between the inventions, as defined in PCT rule 13.2 does not exist. Accordingly the international application does not relate to one invention or to a single inventive concept.

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT
Information on patent family members

International Application No.
PCT/AU 96/00010

This Annex lists the known "A" publication level patent family members relating to the patent documents cited in the above-mentioned international search report. The Australian Patent Office is in no way liable for these particulars which are merely given for the purpose of information.

Patent Document Cited in Search Report		Patent Family Member					
US	5277362						
AU	44746/93	CA	2103748	EP	587314	US	5282568
		US	5328092				
AU	79004/94						
US	5207373	US	5118031				
US	5251810						
US	4993624						
US	3506186						
US	4445635						
DT	2614013	FR	2346231	NL	7702273		
US	5285958	CA	2065756	IL	101037	US	5169061
US	5232150						
DE	3130996						
US	4706877	BR	8800052	CA	1308394	DE	3771194
		EP	274225	MW	79/87	PT	86492
		ZM	90/87				

END OF ANNEX